

universe of all recreational fishermen that fish in coastal waters. Within this sampling universe, those recreational fishermen who fish for shellfish can be surveyed for information such as the amount of catch, estimates of fishing effort, gear used, and area fished. Sampling strategies can be developed without having a sampling universe defined by a license, but surveys conducted that lack the advantage of contacting known participants would be both costly and less precise.

Both the Hard Clam FMP (DMF 2001) and the Oyster FMP (DMF 2001) supported the adoption of a mechanism that would provide data on recreational shellfish harvest. As a result of this recommendation, House Bill 1427 was introduced before the general assembly in 2004 to establish a recreational shellfish license. This license would have been for shellfish only and would have been instituted on a trial basis for three years. However, the bill was never passed. In 2004, House Bill 831 did pass a saltwater fishing license that mandated those individuals recreationally fishing for both finfish and shellfish obtain a license. However, the state legislature revisited the issue in 2005 and replaced the saltwater fishing license with the CRFL. The CRFL, which will be implemented January 1, 2007, will only be required when targeting finfish. It will not be required for shellfishing.

DMF has developed an optional survey to obtain additional information on shellfishing from CRFL license holders at the point of license sale. If an individual chooses to participate in the survey, one of the questions will be, "Do you harvest oysters, clams, or scallops? (Yes/No)". This survey is intended to identify a pool of individuals to survey at a later date with more specific questions regarding their harvest. However, this survey will only be presented to people who buy a CRFL from Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) or DMF license sales offices or the Internet. Initially, it will not be presented to people who buy a CRFL from other WRC license agents (i.e., Wal-Mart, bait and tackle shops, etc.), and it is likely that the majority of people who buy a license will never be presented with the opportunity to participate in this survey. This series of optional survey questions will be assessed after April 1, 2007 and may be expanded to include all CRFL sales agents. Additionally, this survey would neglect any individuals who fish exclusively for shellfish and would therefore not purchase a CRFL.

It is believed that some recreational fishermen purchase a commercial shellfish license because the license is easy to obtain (available to any NC resident), is relatively inexpensive (\$25), and allows fishermen to harvest more shellfish than the recreational limits allow. The Trip Ticket Program will only capture landings of fishermen who sell their catch to certified dealers. Therefore, identifying individuals who purchase a commercial shellfish license but do not have any record of landings within the North Carolina Trip Ticket Program will provide a pool of people to survey to determine if the license is indeed being used for recreational purposes. This is also true for fishermen who buy a SCFL with a shellfish endorsement, but do not have any record of landing shellfish. Although this approach limits the sampling universe to only recreational fishermen who bought a commercial license and eliminates those recreational fishermen who did not buy a license, it would still provide some information on recreational shellfishing that can occur without being constrained to recreational harvest limits.